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Not Quite Your Grandmother's Jam: Place, Time, and Identity in Constructing a Home-Canning Community of Practice

by

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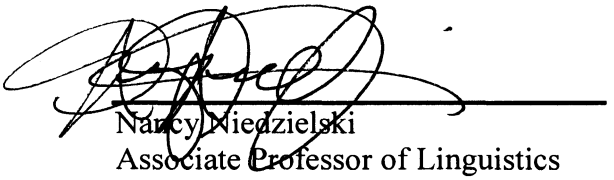

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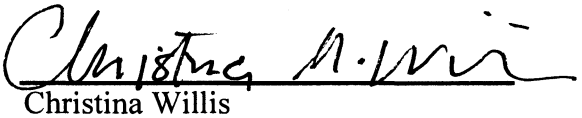

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis contributes to the emerging, interdisciplinary field of food studies. Taking a qualitative, discourse-analytic perspective, I analyze the discursive strategies employed by a group of home canners in the construction of their community of practice. The community of practice framework (Wenger 1998) posits three defining characteristics: mutual engagement of participants, a jointly negotiated enterprise, and shared repertoires. Drawing on narrative analysis and adopting an anti-essentialist view of identity, I examine the way members use the discursive construction of time and place as symbolic resources in the formulation of their identities and in the maintenance of their community. Directions for further research into the complex relationships among language, identity, and food are recommended.

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Contents

1. Introduction

Food—its preparation, acquisition, and consumption—is increasingly a part of popular, political, and academic culture in the US. Ever more television programs, newspaper columns, and websites devote themselves to food matters; national food policy continues to gain public attention; and universities are increasingly offering courses or entire degree programs on the study of food policy and culture. However, linguistics has not yet demonstrated this interest. Aside from Lakoff's (2006) paper on the linguistic construction of food identities, the field of linguistics has not yet joined other social sciences and humanities disciplines in considering food as an area of study. We do not merely cook and eat food - we talk about it, construct good and bad foods, blog about what we ate for dinner, and share recipes online. These are all sites rich for identity work, and discourse linguistics offers an array of tools to study this. The present study recognizes the dearth of linguistic research of food, a potential "gastrolinguistics" (Lakoff 2006: 144), and seeks to address this gap in a small way, by examining the discourse of a group of home canners.

Focusing on a collection of essays published on a home-canning website, this thesis takes a discourse-analytic approach in considering the way in which the stories these writers tell about their home canning experiences serve both as a means of performing "minor," food-related identities, as well as a way of constructing their community of practice (Wenger 1998). In the essays I examine here, ideology, time, and place serve as symbolic, discursively-constructed resources upon which authors draw in accomplishing both individual and group identity.

1.1 Food Studies

This thesis contributes to the emerging, interdisciplinary field of food studies. In its broadest sense, food studies may be understood as a field "that includes foodways, gastronomy, and culinary history as well as historical, cultural, political, economic, and geographic examinations of food production and consumption" ("Food Studies" 2003). More succinctly, "[f]ood studies...is not really the study of food itself but rather the study of the relationships between food and the human experience." (Miller and Deutsch 2010: 3).

The first food studies department in the U.S. was formed at New York University in 1996, offering students the chance to specialize either in food culture or food systems. Marion Nestle, endowed professor in this department and best-selling author of, most notably, *Food Politics: How the Food Industry Influences Nutrition and Health* (Nestle 2007), defines food studies as a new field that is "a means to investigate critical questions about production and consumption" (160). In considering whether today's food advocacy, as represented in popular culture by the likes of Alice Waters and Michael Pollan, constitutes an organized social movement, she concludes that food advocacy in fact comprises many "mini-movements" (Nestle & McIntosh 2010: 164), each with specific goals. The current interest in home canning draws on the values of a number of these, including movements advocating organic food, local food, and slow food. Food studies programs have begun establishing themselves at other universities since NYU's started, and several academic journals have been created to meet this growing need (e.g. *Food, Culture, and Society,* first published in 1997, and *Gastronomica*, first published in 2001).

The scholarly field of food studies has emerged and grown in tandem with popular, social engagement in food and related issues. Food related books such as Michael Pollan's *Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals* (2006), which was named one of the ten best books that year by the *New York Times*, appeal to both food scholars and lay audiences. There is an increasing number of articles on food in newspapers; food articles regularly top the most-emailed articles list on the New York Times website ("Cracking" 2008). Food blogs have become a genre unto themselves, as the Internet has become an increasingly popular way to access and transmit information about food. Indeed, the home-canning community that is the focus of this study has turned to the Internet to convene a community surrounding a somewhat obscure hobby, and the Internet has allowed spatiotemporal discontinuities among (potential) members to be overcome in order to share their canning experiences with like-minded others.

1.1.1 Food in anthropology

Food studies as a distinct academic discipline is preceded by food related inquiries in the fields of anthropology and sociology. Perhaps the most recognized anthropological work on food is *The Raw and the Cooked*, by Claude Lévi-Strauss (1983), who observed that the process of turning raw foods into cooked foods (or otherwise prepared foods) is in essence the process of transforming nature into culture. Also significant is anthropologist Sidney Mintz's examination of the impact of sugar on Western societies, *Sweetness and Power* (1985), which takes an historical approach in considering the roles of sugar production and consumption in colonialism and the rise of capitalism.

Since 1999 the journal *Anthropology of Food* has been in publication and numerous university courses, books, and articles are now available in this field. In 2007, University of Indiana Bloomington's Anthropology Department began offering a doctorate degree in the anthropology of food, reflecting just how important the study of food has become in the field of anthropology.

1.1.2 Food in sociology

Sociology has historically taken some interest in matters of food, and Bourdieu's *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (1979) is not only the most well known book on the sociology of food, but is also considered to be one of the most influential sociological books of the 20th century. Bourdieu examines French culture in the 1960s and concludes that "taste" is a means of demonstrating access to cultural capital, which is closely linked to social class. Beardsworth and Keil's *Sociology on the Menu* (1997) considers the otherwise historically marginal status of food studies within sociology. They regard food studies as having long been thought of as a "specialized area which deserves attention, but which is never likely to be of central importance," but argue that "attempts to describe and understand the complex interrelations between food and society deserve special attention, deserve elevation to a position equal that of the major themes of contemporary sociology" (Beardsworth and Keil 1997: 1). They suggest the prior lack of sociological interest stems in part from food and eating being mundane aspects of daily life. Moreover, most sociologists work in places that have a secure food supply, so food remains "invisible" to sociologists. They also suggest that the lack of historical attention to food in their field could be due to the fact that food is closely

associated with women's work: "The purchasing, preparation and presentation of food...are strongly associated with the mundane, unglamorous labor of housework, the traditional domain of women, and hold little intellectual appeal to the male researchers and theorists who have historically dominated the profession" (Beardsworth and Keil 1997: 2). However, the authors observe a somewhat belated "surge" in interest among sociologists that has "mov[ed] previously marginal themes [such as food] toward the center of interest and into the mainstream of sociological debate" (Beardsworth and Keil 1997: 6). When this book was published in 1997, the authors were already noting an increased interest in food scholarship in their field, which has since expanded tremendously.

It is clear that sociology and anthropology have taken to engaging with food related issues in a very productive way in at least the past 15 or so years. From universities offering courses and degree programs in food and culture, to books and entire journals being dedicated to the scholarly study of food, it is apparent that the social sciences have embraced food as a fruitful focus of investigation.

1.1.3 Food in linguistics

Despite the considerable amount of work done on the social meaning of food in anthropology and sociology, and the burgeoning field of food studies, almost no work has been done in linguistics on food and identity. Lakoff (2006) stands out as perhaps the only research done on language, food, and identity. Lakoff's study looks at the way in which "minor identities," such as taste in food, clothing, or music, contribute to our sense of who we are. She examines the minor identities of some middle-class residents of

Berkeley, California, in the 1990s, and how their "food attitudes are part of the creation of a sense of social cohesion within that subculture" (144).

First, the study considers what a restaurant menu can communicate to its reader, as the menu is "the first clear opportunity for the restaurant to identify itself to the patron and give an indication about what kind of establishment it is, and, therefore, what kind of patrons they anticipate serving, in terms of their prior knowledge and interactive behavior." (151) With the assumption that "our identity is predicated on what we know about food" (150), Lakoff considers the identities that are created and assumed through restaurant menus—what information they include, what they omit, how they do it, and the attendant identity implications for both diner and restaurant. The menu creates expectations for the diner as well as reflecting who the restaurant imagines the diner to be, including their level of culinary awareness and sophistication.

The first set of menus under examination is from Chez Panisse, a "temple of gastronomy" (151) that aims to serve patrons "who are both affluent...and knowledgeable" (151). The menu changes daily and does not offer diners options; each day is *prix-fixe* and the diner must accept the list of offerings for that day. Lakoff observes that the menus are "both curiously vague and oddly specific" (151). Menu items are listed with their source, for example, "Paine Farm squab," "Larsen Ranch pork shoulder," and "Liberty Ranch duck." This kind of specificity constructs the menu reader as "not only a person of taste and refinement, but of consummate ecological sensitivity" (152). The menu is also at times quite vague, as in listing simply "an aperitif," requiring trust on the part of the diner in the culinary choices of the chef. The diner must be "in awe of the environs" and "open-minded" (152) to accept this vagueness in the menu. The

extensive use of foreign languages "presumes a worldliness" (153) on the part of the diner: one day the first course includes *migas*; another day dessert is *baba au rhum.* Lakoff concludes that "the patron must be linguistically sophisticated and titilated rather than put off by opaque terminology" (153). In all, the Chez Panisse menu constructs an identity for its imagined diner as someone who is trusting of the good taste of the chef (as it is a highly respected and very expensive establishment), and sophisticated enough to appreciate the menu's specificity and widespread use of foreign language and culinary jargon.

Lakoff compares the Chez Panisse menu with that of a "humble Chinese takout" (153) across the street. The Oriental Restaurant menu creates "a very different relationship" between restaurant and diner, and "a very different sort of customer (or, perhaps the same customer in a different frame of mind) is presupposed" (153). For example, while Chez Panisse's menu offers no choices to the customer, Oriental Restaurant's offers nearly one hundred options, each numbered and many of them illustrated. The menu is specific by way of its illustrations, but also vague in other ways: we are not provided the farm from which the foods are sourced, nor the cooking method. The imagined customer need not know a foreign language or culinary jargon, and is given full choice of what they will be eating.

In both cases, Lakoff construes the menu as a type of "interaction" which "creates a relationship between patron and restaurateur. Each comes to the table (as it were) with pre-existing expectations of character, interaction, and roles to be played; the menu merely validates and underscores those assumptions" (154). The menu plays an important role in constructing the identity of the restaurant, in large part by constructing the identity

of the diner. A menu as a form of interaction constructs a relationship that serves to define both parties' identities through the menu discourse.

The second type of data the article examines is the recipe, which Lakoff calls the "reciprocal" of the menu in that "[t]he reader becomes the means of production rather than consumption" (157). But, just as with the menu, the recipe is composed with the reader's identity in mind. The level of detail offered in a recipe's instructions, or the degree of autonomy left to the reader, reflects differing levels of sophistication and expertise in the imagined reader. The study looks at how three different cookbooks provide instruction for the preparation of potato gratin. A long, precise recipe constructs the reader as someone who is unfamiliar with how to layer potato slices in a gratin, while a shorter, looser set of instructions imagines a reader possessing more kitchen experience. Unexplained techniques and exotic ingredients assume a reader with a higher level of sophistication. And just as the recipe constructs a reader through these linguistic choices, "the reader in turn constructs his/her identity as a 'cook' on the basis of that conversation" (164), that is, a neophyte in need of explicit instruction, or an experienced cook who is simply looking for "a little advice from a professional colleague" (164).

The study concludes by reasserting that "'minor identities' like culinary preferences and sophistication contribute significantly to our sense of self: who we are, how competent we are, who our friends are or should be, whom we admire or disdain" (165). However, despite this potentially important role in contributing to our sense of self, food, and the discourse surrounding it, has not been an area of interest within linguistics. We develop special ways of describing wine, bring certain expectations when reading a recipe, consult restaurant reviews, read menus, peruse food blogs, and watch

instructional cooking shows; food is both a mundane part of the every day and a thing to be elevated, celebrated with, and most of all, talked about. Foods themselves can be symbolic markers of identity, and through discourse about food we construct "minor" identities. Lakoff's (2006) work stands alone in its exploration of the relationships among food, identity, and language, and the present study seeks to address this gap in its investigation of discourse practices among a home-canning community of practice.

1.2 The history of home canning in the U.S.

Before beginning a discussion of the discourse of a group of home canners, it is useful to understand the history of home canning in the U.S., and how home canning has come to experience a renewed popularity in recent years. Home canning as a means of food preservation became popular in the US in the nineteenth century. The first instructional document published by the USDA was Farmer's Bulletin 359 in 1909, a document that touted the economic benefits of "domestic" canning and outlined safe procedures for doing so (Andress 1998). By the 1930s, however, due to increased industrialization of the food supply, most households relied on commercially canned products instead. This changed during World War II, when home canning became briefly repopularized as a natural complement to victory gardens in the face of rationing of canned goods, which were being sent to Allied troops overseas. Americans could express their patriotism and feel they were doing their part to support the war effort. In 1942 the federal government began strongly advocating the practice of home canning as an essential duty of citizens on the "kitchen front." U.S. home canning reached its peak in 1943, when three-quarters of American households reported canning foods for family

consumption, and half of the produce used in canning was grown in victory gardens or on family farms (Bentley 1998: 131-132).

Community canning centers sprang up all over the country as a way to ease the burdens of cost and labor that came with home canning. A device called a pressure canner is required to process low-acid foods such as vegetables and meats, and these community canning centers eliminated the need for families to purchase such expensive canning equipment. These centers also offered the benefit of allowing women to work together rather than in the isolation of their homes (Bentley 1998: 134). When the government eased food rationing restrictions in 1944, Americans no longer felt the need to continue with their victory gardens and home canning efforts at the same rate as before, and the practice of home canning declined.

After the war, families largely relied on pre-packaged convenience foods instead of those preserved and processed at home. The back-to-the-land movement of the 1960s and 1970s briefly brought about a renewed interest in home canning, but this rediscovery was again abandoned in favor of convenience foods, particularly as more households became dual-income (Belasco 2007: 194). In the mid-1970s, canning found increased popularity among higher-income households, whose food decisions were based more upon nutritional concern and fear of preservatives than those of lower-income households (*ibid.*).

Home canning is experiencing another resurgence in the 21st century. In fact, 2009 marked the year that home canning began to be understood as a social movement rather than an isolated practice among a few individuals with direct ties to the practice, such as family traditions or farm work. Prior to 2009, media coverage of home canning

depicted it as a quaint, antiquated sort of hobby. Canning was portrayed as a relic of farm life, or a tradition passed down within a single family, and not as a practice embedded in greater social context. In 1999, an article in *The New York Times Magazine* spotlights an 80-year old woman who continues to can at home, just seven miles from the Delaware farm where she grew up canning, a practice deemed "a bygone curiosity" that has all but disappeared if not for a few such passionate people (O'Neill 1999). An *L.A. Times* article from 2001 titled "How to put a garden in a jar" (Green 2001) is a portrait of home canner Edon Waycott, who "describes jam-making as one of a continuum of pursuits...painting, fabric design and cookery writing, including a book on jam." Home canning is portrayed as an individual activity, even a fringe one, not shared by any of Waycott's friends; she "is lost for words at how to describe herself" because she is not participating in home canning as part of a group and it has not yet reached the level of popular community activity. Home canning is too often viewed as unfashionable and outmoded, as a 2002 article laments: "home preserving has an image about as hip and sexy as a gingham apron" (Parsons 2002). The article also notes that home canning has yet to become popular among foodie types: "It is surprising that in this do-it-yourself world of cooking, where people brag about making their own bread, fresh pasta and chicken stock, that jam making is still so little regarded" (Parsons 2002). A 2004 piece in *The New York Times* takes a nostalgic view of home canning, telling the story of two brothers who have adapted the canning tradition they learned from their grandmother in order to account for smaller quantities of produce (Lee and Lee 2004). Similarly, a 2007 piece on National Public Radio tells the story of a woman for whom "canning is as much of a family

tradition as turkey at Thanksgiving" (Morris 2007), without a hint that in only a couple of years, canning would expand well beyond a family's well kept tradition.

By 2009, a *New York Times* headline declares, "During Tough Times, Canning Makes a Comeback" (Moore 2009). The article describes a marked increase in community canning activities from the previous year. For instance, in Greene County, Missouri, the same canning classes offered by the University of Missouri extension office that struggled to fill two classes in 2008 were unable to keep up with demand for those classes in 2009. The article also cites a 30% increase over the same period in sales of jars and lids from a national home canning retailer. In 2009 a popular design blog recognizes "a new wave of canners, thinking outside the jar" who enthusiastically convene to hold "jam sessions" (English 2009) which include educational activities and swaps, the greatest among these being the kick-off party weekend (dubbed "Can-A-Rama") held by national home-canning organization Canning Across America in August of 2009, which they proclaim to be the advent of a "canvolution" (O'Donnell 2009). This was also the year of inception for the now-popular blog, *Food in Jars*, because, the blog's author explains, "Nobody was just talking about canning and preserving. But it has really exploded in the last few months" (Lynch 2010).

The May 26, 2009 Dining section of *The New York Times* included two articles on home canning. The first trumpets the growing popularity of home canning among a politically aware demographic, not the grandmotherly or farm-raised types featured in previous articles. The article begins with a brief portrait of a new home preserving cookbook author, Eugenia Bone, a middle-aged woman who lives (and cans) in her SoHo apartment: she "is not the blue-ribbon farm wife usually brought to mind by the phrase

'home preserving expert.' She spent her youth in a plastic miniskirt, smoking and running between punk music shows on the Lower East Side" (Moskin 2009a). The article notes that while "[p]reserving food cannot be considered new and trendy...the recent revival of attention to it fits neatly into the modern renaissance of handcrafted food, heirloom agriculture, and using food in its season." In addition, home preserving is "a quasi-political act," a response to food safety issues and an increasingly industrialized food supply. The canners featured in this article differentiate themselves from more traditional canners, for instance by their disdain for pectin, a thickener often added in traditional canning recipes. These canners prefer to keep their jams as natural as possible and therefore rely on longer cooking time and the pectin found naturally in many fruits to thicken their jams for them. A companion article published the same day, "Some Canning Dos and Don'ts" (Moskin 2009b), assures readers that canning is no more a specialized skill than baking, and if done properly it is something to be enjoyed rather than feared. The first article announces canning as the hot new cooking trend among the culinary and "eco" cognoscenti, and the second encourages readers to join in.

By 2010, home canning is recognized as a widespread activity. An article in *The Washington Post* from 2010 declares "canning is all the rage among food lovers" (Black 2010), while a National Public Radio story names home canning a "recession-proof food trend of 2010" (Hansen 2010) for its mix of craft and thrift. The same author who in an L.A. Times piece lamented the decidedly unhip status of home canning in 2002 sees the tides having turned: "And so now I'm reading that jam-making has become a favored pastime of the culinary adventurers" (Parsons 2010). Another piece proclaims: "Canning is having a moment" (Lynch 2010), partly evidenced by the myriad home-canning blogs.

And, the author observes, it is more than a fad: "This canning-pickling-jamming craze isn't just a trend, it's a movement." A 2011 story on National Public Radio recognizes home canning as a well established trend, and a hip one, at that: "The jar is back, the old-fashioned art of canning and preserving fruits and vegetables is cool again, thanks to a big boost from foodies and locavores" (Sommerstein 2011). The story documents a canning swap in Canton, NY. Canning swaps are increasingly popular events in which home canners convene to exchange anything canned and homemade, from jams and pickles to kimchi and apple ketchup. It is noted that "[h]alf of the swappers are in their 20s and 30s. And they're really into it" (Sommerstein 2011).

What was in 2002 an activity "about as hip and sexy as a gingham apron" (Parsons 2002) and the province of grandmothers and those who learned from them, by 2009 was established in popular media as a cutting edge food trend, an activity taken up by young people and residents from urban rather than rural areas, and a practice embedded in larger social movements and food trends such as locavorism[1], alternative food networks[2], the Slow Food movement[3], and even urban homesteading[4].

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[1] Also known as the local foods movement, "locavorism" describes a social movement whose aim is to eat primarily those foods that are grown or produced within a 100-mile radius.

[2] Alternative food networks reflect a model of agriculture in which consumers have direct access to producers, in contrast with national chain grocery stores in which food is often shipped from around the globe. Examples include farmers markets, community-supported agriculture, and food co-ops.

[3] Slow Food (a play on "fast food") is a grassroots organization propagating the belief that food should balance pleasure with environmental awareness, and encourages people to obtain and prepare local, native foods instead of choosing convenience foods.

[4] Urban homesteading involves engaging in such activities as raising chickens, maintaining vegetable gardens, using alternative forms of energy, and preserving foods in order to achieve a high degree of household self-sufficiency.

1.3 Overview of the thesis

The purpose of this thesis is to make the case for Canning Across America (CAA) to be understood as a community of practice, which will be accomplished by looking at the way in which participants use discourse as a means of constructing their community. In addition, this thesis offers a contribution to an area of research sorely lacking consideration, the way language is used to construct food-related identities. This paper accepts Lakoff's (2006) basic premise that food and identity are intricately related, and that the discourses constructed around food reveal much about an individual's or group's sense of who they are and where they belong. This paper will explore the construction of identity through food discourses in the context of a online home-canning community of practice.

The remainder of this thesis is structured as follows. In Chapter 2 I explain the sources and nature of my data, and present the theoretical underpinnings of my study. This chapter includes discussions of identity, narrative, and prior research on food and language. In Chapter 3, I define 'community of practice,' provide a background of the CAA community, and begin to demonstrate some of the practices that distinguish them as a community of practice. I next consider the roles of place and time in the stories told by CAA members in Chapters 4 and 5 respectively, arguing that place and time serve as more than a mere backdrop to the stories being told; they are instead strategically used as symbolic resources in individual and group identity construction. Finally, I conclude in Chapter 6 with a discussion of how CAA, as an online community, can expand and inform our understanding of the community of practice, and offer some suggestions for future research.

2. Methodology

2.1 The data

The data I will discuss are drawn from the "Guest Essays" published on the Canning Across America (CAA) website (www.canningacrossamerica.com) between 2009, when the website was created, and July 3, 2011. A total of nine essays are specifically discussed in this paper, selected from a total of 22 that were published in this time frame. These essays are written by a variety of key CAA community members, including CAA founders, food bloggers, cookbook authors, chefs, and those new to canning. In each essay, the author tells a story about a past "canning adventure" or offers tips for those just starting out.

2.2 Theoretical underpinnings

Research across the humanities and social sciences has demonstrated the significant role language plays in the formation and negotiation of identity (de Fina, Schiffrin, and Bamberg 2006: 1). Based on a wealth of previous social sciences research (see e.g. Benwell and Stokoe 2006: 31), this paper adopts an anti-essentialist view of individual identity, such that there is no essential, "core essence" of a person (de Fina et al. 2006: 3), but rather that identity is shifting, dynamic, occasioned, and performed and achieved through discourse (Benwell and Stokoe 2006: 34). This postmodern understanding of identity "presumes all meaning to be situated not within the self, but in a series of representations mediated by semiotic systems such as language" (Benwell and Stokoe 2006: 31). Through language and other symbolic means people can perform

particular identities, which, as this thesis specifically considers, are often tied up with community membership. This thesis accepts Wenger's (1998) assertion that identity is a product of "negotiating the meanings of our experience of membership in social communities" (145). The present study considers the way CAA participants establish identities for themselves *vis-á-vis* their membership in a home-canning community of practice, and this is accomplished through discourse, specifically narrative discourse, as they participate in their community.

Narrative as a site for identity construction "is theorized in similar ways to the discursive construction of identity more generally" such that narrative is understood to be a "practice through which identity is performed, articulated, and struggled over" (Benwell and Stokoe 2006: 138). Narrative is often defined according to structural characteristics, as in Labov's (1972) definition of a narrative as consisting of two or more temporally ordered clauses. Functionally, narrative can be understood as a "sense-making process" (Ochs and Capps 2001: 15) by which tellers use language "to imbue life events with a temporal and logical order, to demystify them and establish coherence across past, present, and yet unrealized experience" (Ochs and Capps 2001: 2). Perhaps most importantly, studying narrative addresses "the question of how we construct what we call our lives and how we create ourselves in the process" (Brockmeier and Carbaugh 2001: 6). This connection between narrative and identity will be kept in focus as we consider the ways in which CAA participants construct themselves as particular types of people in the stories they tell about their home-canning experiences, and how this in turn contributes to and reflects the ethos of their community of practice.

This chapter has presented several basic theoretical assumptions regarding identity, discourse, and narrative, all of which are fundamental to the claims I make in this thesis. Additional pertinent areas of theoretical interest are discussed where they are relevant: Chapter 3 explores Wenger's (1998) community of practice framework and begins to argue that CAA constitutes such a community. Section 4.1 considers the literature on the discursive construction of place in narrative and the contemporary perspective on the importance of place as a symbolic resource in narrative. Finally, Section 5.1 reviews the literature on time as a discursively constructed resource in narrative and considers the role of nostalgia in identity construction.

3. Home canners as a community of practice

3.1 Defining 'community of practice'

The *community of practice* is a social construct established by Lave and Wenger (1991) and more thoroughly developed by Wenger's (1998) ethnography of a group of medical claims processors. Wenger (2006) offers this concise definition: "Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly." This social configuration develops over time, as interactants engage in the process of social learning. Membership in a community of practice is by definition established and maintained by participation in social practices. Practice, in this sense, is a source of community coherence and has three defining characteristics (Wenger 1998): (1) mutual engagement of participants; (2) jointly negotiated enterprise; and (3) shared repertoires. In Section 3.3 I will discuss each of these in turn as I make the case that CAA constitutes a community of practice, a claim

that I will further support in Chapters 4 and 5 through an analysis of CAA discourse. First, though, I will briefly review some of the key linguistic literature that makes use of the community of practice framework.

The community of practice was first suggested as a worthwhile framework in linguistic research by Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1992). Specifically, the authors seek to remedy a tendency in language and gender research of isolating gender from the communities and practices in which and through which it is constructed. Taking into account communities and social practices is to "abandon several assumptions common in gender and language studies: that gender can be isolated from other aspects of social identity and relations, that it 'means' the same across communities, and that the linguistic manifestations of that meaning are also the same across communities" (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1992: 461). The authors propose a more "local" look, at real communities and real practices, rather than a global look at speakers who are understood according to abstracted sociolinguistic variables like age, gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic class.

After their 1992 paper introducing the idea of communities of practice to sociolinguistic research, Eckert and McConnell-Ginet continued to develop their ideas through numerous studies on linguistic variation among students at Belten High[5] (Eckert 2000 and 2001; Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1995 and 1999). The Belten High studies identified two broad communities of practice, "jocks" and "burnouts," and concluded that variation in vowels associated with the Northern Cities Shift could be partially accounted for by taking into consideration these social categories.

[5] "Belten High" is a pseudonym for a high school in the Detroit suburbs where the ethnographic research was performed.

Davies (2005) notes that the community of practice framework may be used in conjunction with the speech community construct or as an alternative to it, but that in either case it offers sociolinguists a valuable means for studying language variation and individual identity. This study draws mainly on the Belten High data in considering the internal structure of communities of practice, focusing on the issue of gaining membership in such a community. She finds that membership cannot be gained based solely on an individual's desire to be a part of a community, but rather that the community authorizes entrance of new members and determines who may participate: "While practices may define the community, the community determines who has access to that practice" (Davies 2005: 557).

A special issue of the journal *Language in Society* (1999) considers the usefulness of the community of practice framework in sociolinguistic research. Bucholtz (1999) finds the community of practice framework a useful alternative to the speech community in her study of a high school community of "nerd" girls, demonstrating how these students use linguistic practices to construct and critique gender identities. Meyerhoff (1999) applies the community of practice framework to Bislama speakers on the South Pacific island of Vanuatu, specifically considering the distribution of apology routines using the word *sore* 'sorry' among men and women. She concludes that although the women use *sore* more than men, their shared apology practices do not make them a community of practice because they lack a shared goal; instead, this linguistic variation is better understood through the lens of the speech community or intergroup theory. Ehrlich (1999) uses the community of practice framework as an alternative to global, essentializing ways of thinking about "gendered" speech styles. The community of

practice framework is offered as a way of better understanding the ways gender interacts with practices to produce linguistic behaviors; this is explored in analyzing testimony at a university sexual assault tribunal. Finally, Freed (1999) studies the narratives of pregnant women and concludes that while pregnant women themselves do not constitute a community of practice, their narratives are shaped through interactions with the medical communities of practice with which they regularly engage.

Most frequently applied to sociolinguistic research, the community of practice framework can offer much to discourse linguistics as well. Seilhamer (2011) applies the framework to the realm of discourse linguistics, positing an online crank caller community of practice. The community practice of maintaining a "fabricated frame" throughout a crank call is demonstrated through analyzing transcripts of calls made by highly competent community members as well as showing how novice members are instructed not to reveal the nature of their call. Ostermann (2003) looks at discursive practices of two all-female institutions in Brazil that deal with female victims of domestic abuse, an all-female police station and a feminist crisis intervention center. The study finds that variations in patterns of discourse in dealing with victims of domestic abuse "are best understood as reflecting the gendered communities of practice from which the professionals are drawn" and that "gender does not predict interactional patterns" in these contexts (Ostermann 2003: 1).

The community of practice framework was brought into the field of linguistics by sociolinguists interested in language and gender as an alternative or complement to the speech community. More recently, discourse linguists have begun making use of this framework in their research. The present study analyzes the discursive construction of a

community of practice through participants' storytelling practices. This community will be introduced in the following section.

3.2 Canning Across America: A general background

Canning Across America (CAA) is an organization dedicated to promoting a renewed interest in community-based food preservation, a trend they term the "canvolution." Their mission statement describes CAA as

> a nationwide, ad hoc collective of cooks, gardeners and food lovers committed to the revival of the lost art of "putting by" food. Our goal is to promote safe food preservation and the joys of community building through food. We believe in celebrating the bounty of local and seasonal produce and taking greater control of our food supply. Together, we can. ("Who we are")

CAA's web-based approach allows them to reach a geographically unrestricted audience, and it uses three types of Web media to promote its message. First, and primarily, is its website, which offers a range of home-canning resources as well as a limited amount of user-generated content. Resources include cookbooks, websites, blogs, and online videos that offer home-canning instruction and recipes, as well as guidelines for hosting a canning party at home. User-generated content includes the CAA photo of the week, which is chosen by site administrators from among the week's Flickr pool submissions, and the occasional guest essay written by a community leader (a CAA founder, an established food blogger, a cookbook writer, etc). In these personal essays, authors share canning memories and experiences, offer encouragement and inspiration to readers, and also serve to help define the values of the CAA community and of the "canvolution." These essays contribute to and reflect a larger discourse on home canning, which naturally fits with other food and lifestyle narratives.

CAA promotes the relationship- and community-building potential of engaging in home canning through several events. During their annual Can-A-Thon week (usually sometime in the month of August, when plenty of fresh produce is available), individuals across the country are encouraged to register with CAA to host their own local canning parties. A document on the CAA website outlines the equipment, ingredients, cost estimates, and procedures for hosting such a party, and recalls one example of a canning party: "An Afternoon of Pickles" (Ingram 2009). During this event, a few experts shared their "collective knowledge with a small group of friends," and at the end of the day participants took home jars of dill and bread-and-butter pickles they had helped to make.

Guest essays on the CAA website also construct home canning as an activity that brings people together. One CAA co-founder recalls a day of canning and socializing with her fellow co-founders, a group she had canned with so many times before that "[w]hen it's time to fill the jars, we all seem to know instinctively who's going to do what" (Sauvage 2010). Another contributor tells the story of a recently widowed neighbor whom she coaxed into teaching her all he knew about canning; in the course of two years of canning together, he reconnected with his estranged family as he sought out old family recipes (Hopkins 2010). Another essay invites readers to share their knowledge with anyone interested in canning by inviting them into their kitchen for an afternoon lesson. By doing so, the author herself feels like a "canning fairy godmother" when she hears of friends who have later made pickles or preserves in their own kitchens (Weaver 2010). These stories all portray home canning as a tradition that connects us to people via knowledge transmission: recalling lessons from the past, learning new skills together, or transmitting one's skills to new learners.

CAA also participates in Flickr, a photo-sharing website. They allow others to join their Flickr "pool" and submit photos of their canning activities. The CAA Flickr pool has (as of November 19, 2011) 358 members and 1,742 member-contributed photos. The top five contributors to the Flickr pool have contributed between 61 and 70 photos each. Flickr allows members to share images of the canning process as they work through it, from a bushel of fruit, to a water bath, to jars filled with jam and affixed with a custom label, to a pantry filled with such colorful jars. Photos are submitted with a caption and sometimes a more detailed description, such as a link to the recipe or how the jam or pickles were used. Occasionally members comment on one another's photos to offer praise or ask questions. Members may also "tag" photos in the CAA pool with metadata, such as "maple syrup," "pickles," or "food in jars," or add exemplary photos to their "favorites." The Flickr pool allows home canners who are geographically and temporally separated to gain visual access to the handiwork of other home canners, which allows novices to learn and more experienced members to demonstrate their expertise.

The third facet of CAA's Internet presence is their Twitter account. Twitter is a microblogging and social networking service that allows users to post brief (140 characters) messages, called Tweets, and read the messages of the users they "follow." CAA's Twitter handle is "Canvolution;" as of November 19, 2011, they have posted 4,874 Tweets and have 2,689 followers. Twitter offers CAA members the opportunity to interact in meaningful ways: members post updates or questions about their canning projects, news articles pertinent to the home-canning community, and expressions of excitement about CAA events. Unlike guest essays on the CAA website or photos in the

Flickr pool, Twitter offers a forum that is equally available to novice members as it is to experts. Twitter democratizes community participation.

3.3 Canning Across America: Elements of a community of practice

The "canvolution" as constructed by CAA is about more than just learning to preserve food. In great part, it is about the social potential of food preservation, about the (real or imagined) power of food to bring people together. "[C]ommunity building through food" is a value identified in their organization's mission statement and clearly reflected and instantiated in contributor essays ("Who we are"). In this section I will argue that CAA, through its multimodal web presence (website, Flickr pool, and Twitter account), has established itself as a resource and a site for social learning, and that participants in CAA constitute a community of practice.

3.3.1 Jointly negotiated enterprise

First, it is important to define the nature of the *joint enterprise* being pursued and negotiated by participants. Being a home canner is certainly at the core of the enterprise, and in their individual pursuits of being home canners, participants of the CAA site choose to come together to engage in a larger pursuit of belonging to a home-canning community. Their enterprise is not simply to preserve foods; rather, it involves a constellation of enterprises that "include the instrumental, personal, and interpersonal aspects of our lives" (Wenger 1998:78): developing proficiency at a craft, being ethical consumers, being creative, being artisans, connecting with like-minded people, preparing wholesome food, eating local, cultivating good taste, participating in alternative food

networks. The many practices involved in being a CAA home canner are a "collectively negotiated response to what they understand to be their situation" (78). Their enterprise may be considered *indigenous* (Wenger 1998:79) in that it has arisen organically as a response to the historical, social, and cultural contexts in which the community has emerged—their "situation". This range of contexts includes U.S. culture's renewed interest in food (as evidenced by the rise of celebrity chefs, food programming, and food blogs), the slow food movement, urban homesteading, locavorism, the DIY movement, concerns about food safety, and so on.

Finally, through pursuit of a joint enterprise arises a system of "mutual accountability" (Wenger 1998: 81) among members:

> These relations of accountability include what matters and what does not, what is important and why it is important, what to do and what not to do, what to pay attention to and what to ignore, what to talk about and what to leave unsaid, what to justify and what to take for granted, what to display and what to withhold, when actions and artifacts are good enough and when they need improvement or refinement. (*ibid.*)

Becoming a proficient home canner in this community involves developing "specialized sensitivities, an aesthetic sense, and refined perceptions" (81) that allow members to evaluate the appropriateness or skillfulness of their and others' participation. This is accomplished in part through the submission of photos to the Flickr pool, where members may view one another's canning efforts and exchange comments.

One photo posted in the CAA Flickr pool by user Chiot's Run[6] garnered a number of comments. This photo, entitled "Inspired by Goodness," is composed of four smaller frames, each presenting different angles of Weck jars filled with freshly finished maple syrup. Two different batches produced syrups of two different colors, one a sunny amber

[6] http://www.flickr.com/photos/chiotsrun/4424919423/in/pool-cansacrossamerica#/photos/chiotsrun/4424919423/in/pool-1126869@N25/

and one a deep red. This photo is recognized by members as being a particularly skillful display of both camera work and product, as one commenter notes "This is gorgeous work - both food-wise and photo-wise!" and asks if the author would consider submitting this photo to another group's Flickr pool. The four-frame composition of the photograph is unusual, demonstrating an artistic eye. Members in the comments section declare the photograph "beautiful!", "lovely!" and "wonderful." The use of Weck jars is also unusual, as they are more expensive and require more skill to seal than the typical Ball or Kerr jars. Members orient to the unexpected contents of the jars: not jam or pickles, but maple syrup that the photo's author extracted and finished himself, as he explains in the blog post which is linked below the photo. One commenter recognizes Chiot's Run's expertise and asks, "I'd love some maple trees…I think I live in one of the few places in Australia where they would grow and produce well. How long before you can tap them after planting? What size do they ideally have to be?" This request for information positions Chiot's Run as a member with a particular kind of expertise. He responds with a link to an article addressing these questions, an instance of community members engaging in social learning.

What it means to participate skillfully as a community member is reinforced by the site editors, central community members who choose a weekly photo from among submissions to the Flickr pool to display on the front page of the CAA website. The "CAA Photo of the Week" offers examples of competent community participation. For example, the photo for the week of May 6, 2011, shows a row of four-ounce Ball jars filled with deep garnet-colored preserves, arranged along the edge of a white kitchen towel. The site administrator offers the following:

> Our featured photo for this week is by Melissa-Ann of her batch of strawberry, balsamic vinegar, and black pepper jam. Does that sound like an amazing idea for the strawberries appearing in the markets? If you'd like to follow her recipe, she blogs about it here. Thank you for sharing and inspiring, Melissa!

The photo's author is praised both for the appropriateness of the recipe displayed in her picture and for her participation in the community. User-generated content, such as the photos submitted to the CAA Flickr pool, is essential to the existence of the CAA community, as it demonstrates members' commitment to their enterprise and reinforces the mutual accountability of members. This system of mutual accountability relates closely to the development of a shared repertoire, which will be discussed in Section 3.3.3.

3.3.2 Mutual engagement of participants

First, though, we will discuss the second element of community coherence, mutual engagement of participants. Wenger's (1998) medical claims processors interacted throughout the workday, discussing problems in processing claims, making jokes, complaining, looking forward to their weekend or evening plans. This regular

interaction was made possible in part by the physical proximity of an office setting. While geographical proximity can certainly facilitate community interaction, it is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for community-sustaining mutual engagement to occur (Wenger 1998: 74). In fact, a good deal of the current research on communities of practice and language considers how the model can improve our understanding of online communities (cf. Seilhamer 2011; Stommel and Koole 2010; Planchenault 2010; Clark 2009; Sterling-Deer 2005). Online community members are geographically dispersed, so the nature of their engagement is necessarily different from that of Wenger's claims processors. For the home-canning community, it is the CAA website, Flickr pool, and Twitter account which enable mutual engagement and are a key element of their practice.

Engagement in the CAA community of practice can take a number of forms. As described above, members submitting photos of their home-canning activities serves as one important facet of community engagement. Twitter is a forum that facilitates interaction among home canners, from those novice, peripheral participants who have just attended their first in-person, CAA-affiliated canning workshop, to more central community members who may have their own popular food blogs, all the way to CAA founders. For example, Twitter user LearnToPreserve posted a message to Canvolution (the Twitter handle used by CAA) about having participated in a CAA canning event:

> LearnToPreserve: @kimodonnel @canvolution Thank you for including me tonight. I am thrilled to be a part of your passionate group of preservers. #canvolution

Canvolution and CAA co-founder Kim O'Donnel reply:

> Canvolution: @LearnToPreserve Our pleasure! Terrific meeting tonight. Thanks for joining the gang!

> kimodonnel: @learntopreserve we are thrilled to have you as part of the @Canvolution !

This interaction among members is essential to the formation and maintenance of a community of practice. CAA canning workshops offer interested individuals the opportunity to learn basic skills and have face-to-face interaction with others who share their interest. However, not everyone who wishes to be a member of the CAA community can attend such events, as they are typically held in the Seattle area and CAA participants are widely geographically dispersed. In either case, Twitter offers a forum in which canning neophytes can interact with more experienced community members and receive encouragement for their peripheral participation. Posting such Tweets offers a form of community participation open to unskilled members, who may not have developed the expertise to share their photos on Flickr, as well as geographically distant members (i.e. those outside the Seattle area).

CAA founders, who sit at the top of the community hierarchy, participate in ways that are appropriate to their level: they solicit guest essays from community members they deem to possess sufficient skill and competence; they demonstrate their expertise by developing a canon of resources, from cookbooks to websites to blogs; they shape the definition of competence by choosing the photo of the week; and they promote their organization through media interviews and CAA workshops. Other members may participate by accessing this curated online content, thereby learning about the culture of the community.

3.3.3 Shared repertoires

The final constitutive dimension of practice as a source of community coherence is the development of a shared repertoire, which includes "routines, words, tools, ways of doing things, stories, gestures, symbols, genres, actions, or concepts that the community has produced or adopted in the course of its practice" (Wenger 1998:83). In the course of practice, specialized language quickly becomes necessary, and use of the shared repertoire can distinguish members from non-members. Terms describing methods and artifacts used in traditional canning ("water bath," "pressure canning," "putting up") join terms that are new to this particular enterprise ("canvolution," "harvesting parties," "canning adventures"). Drawing upon the historical while at the same time generating innovative new terminology is evidence of how the development of a shared repertoire both situates members in a tradition and serves as a source of coherence in developing a dynamic practice.

Beyond a lexical repertoire there exists a discursive repertoire, "by which members create meaningful statements about the world, as well as the styles by which they express their forms of membership and their identities as members" (Wenger 1998:83). The guest essays found on the CAA website perform exactly this function. As we will see in Chapters 4 and 5, these essays are a way for more central members to share stories and perspectives on being a home canner, and in the process construct and perform their identities *vis-à-vis* their group membership. These essays both shape and reflect the ethos of the community, and by virtue of being chosen or solicited by the site administrators, serve as exemplars of the CAA home-canning community.

The shared repertoire developed by the community goes beyond the linguistic, however. Contributions to the CAA Flickr pool allow members to share photographs of their canning efforts; being a skilled community member means skillfully drawing upon the community's repertoire as it is constantly re-negotiated in the process of participation. Creating new labels, trying a new angle or lens, or including a caption that highlights information known to be valuable to the community, all exploit resources that are used in the negotiation of meaning, which is above all "dynamic and interactive" (Wenger 1998:84) in nature.

A final aspect of the shared repertoire of this community is a canon of texts that serve as resources for basic canning instruction and also recipes. This collection includes classics, such as the *Ball Blue Book: The Guide to Home Canning and Freezing* (1977), as well as newer, more modern titles, such as Alice Waters's (2002) *Chez Panisse Fruit* or *The Blue Chair Jam Book* (Saunders 2010). Members make reference to these accepted resources in order to demonstrate their proficiency at canning and their competence as community members. As with the example of lexical items, the canon of cookbooks and instructional materials drawn upon by the community includes both the historical and the modern, situating their practice in its traditional roots and also shaping its dynamism.

3.4 Summary

In this chapter I have demonstrated some ways in which CAA operates as an online community of practice through promoting participation in a number of web-based settings. Through the mutual engagement of participants in pursuit of a jointly negotiated

enterprise, CAA members develop material and discursive elements of a shared home-canning repertoire. In Chapters 4 and 5, I will focus on how authors construct themselves as certain types of people through personal narratives about home canning; these narratives also serve to build and reinforce the community for which these stories are told. In the community of practice framework, "[b]uilding an identity consists of negotiating the meanings of our experience of membership in social communities. The concept of identity serves as a pivot between the social and the individual, so that each can be talked about in terms of the other" (Wenger 1998: 145). In the CAA essays, authors express their own situated and occasioned identity as it relates to their membership in this home-canning community of practice; thus, their individual identity both informs and is informed by the nature of the community of which they are members. Further discussion of the mutually constitutive nature of individuals and community can be found in Section 6.1.

4. Place as a symbolic resource in home-canning narratives

This chapter looks at the links between place and identity in essays from the CAA website. CAA participants use the discursive construction of place in formulating their identities and in defining the practice of home canning. Specifically, authors draw on place categories like "suburban," "rural," and "city" in characterizing the practice of canning and their relationship to it.

4.1 Background

The essays examined in this chapter draw on place as a symbolic resource in constructing identity and articulating important community practices. Place has become of increasing interest to theorists in many fields of social science, including human geography and environmental psychology; no longer viewed merely as a "neutral grid" (Gupta and Ferguson 2006) against which narrative action occurs, space and place are, to an increasing extent, viewed as constructed by the words and actions of the people who experience them. Contemporary research into place rejects the "conception that places are fixed, empty and undialectal backgrounds to, or containers of, social action. Places are re-conceived as dynamic arenas that are both socially constituted and constitutive of the social" (Dixon and Durrheim 2000: 27). McCabe and Stokoe (2004) observe that place "categorizations are not just simple, objective or factual descriptions" (604); instead, "space and place, though 'material' and 'physical,' is not 'real' beyond the practices that produce it" (Benwell and Stokoe 2006: 210).

As we will see in this chapter, "not only do *people make spaces"* through discursive actions, "but also *spaces make people*, by constraining them but also offering opportunities for identity construction" (Benwell and Stokoe 2006: 211; emphasis in original). In Section 4.2, I examine the ways in which spatial constructs like "suburban" and "rural" are used to characterize home preservation practices as well as the relationship some CAA participants have to such practices. In Section 4.3, I discuss the ways in which place is invoked in talk about food sourcing practices with the effect of revealing and establishing the ideological basis of the community.

4.2 Rural and suburban: The discursive construction of located identities

Now we will consider two authors who use space and place extensively in constructing themselves, others, and the practice of home canning.

In her essay "Preserving Memories," Dana Cree (2009) recalls her first experiences with canning as a child. Her grandmother was an avid home canner, and the author, her younger sisters, and mother would join their grandmother in picking strawberries at a local farm and then spend the rest of the day making freezer jam. In the course of telling her story, the author uses place as a symbolic resource to represent and manage competing ideologies. She constructs a dichotomy of rural and suburban places, each defined by a set of characteristic people and activities. Place acts as a resource for doing identity work in the course of the narrative.

The author herself offers the following biographical information: she is "a woman...raised in a suburban setting...in my mother's house." Her mother does not, it seems, excel at housekeeping or other domestic activities: she "was a million pieces of joy, but Martha Stewart she was not." In contrast, Cree describes her grandmother as possessing domestic skills far exceeding Martha Stewart's: "Martha Stewart could have sprung fully formed from my grandmothers [sic] soft grey, neatly permed head." She keeps a "tidy" home where "china and silver were used often." Quite different from her mother's suburban sensibilities, Grandma Eva, who had a "rural childhood on a female run ranch," represents all that is good about the rural life, and most importantly, the tradition of canning and preserving foods. The author depicts her suburban upbringing as regrettably limited: "I could have lived entirely in a world of Smuckers jam and Vlasic pickles, never realizing these were manufactured versions of treasured homemade

recipes." Here place is dichotomously characterized by the foods typically consumed there: brand-name, mass-market jams and pickles found in suburban pantries are *ersatz*, impersonal versions of what can be found in rural pantries (and made in rural homes). Grandma Eva delivered the author from the limiting, inauthentic nature of the suburbs by introducing her to "freezer jam and jars of preserved fruits." Preserved foods, it seems, are native to rural areas, while in the suburbs, pantries are populated by national grocery brands.

Her grandmother, a "super hero homemaker," is made to be a figure representing, in part, an idealized version of rurality. She exceeds Martha Stewart's abilities, and excels at traditional domestic activities. Her kitchen is "one of intention," where she "baked daily, cooked, and prepared to entertain." On the other hand, the author's mother had only a "tiny two-butt kitchen," apparently lacking any intention or other notable features. In addition to a well-used kitchen, her grandmother kept a "well manicured garden" and hosted "lavish pick-nicks," replete with wicker picnic basket and real silverware. Perhaps most memorable of all was her grandmother's storeroom, which, in addition to an assortment of collectible toys, was filled with rows of jars filled with preserved fruit, jams, and jelly. The author recalls that the jars "shimmered like jewels," and she was "dazzled by the bright colors," apparently of more interest to her than the toys.

The author aligns herself with her grandmother, praising her traditional domestic skills and Martha Stewart-like persona, yet must also come to terms with the fact that, like her mother, the only Ball jars in her home are devoid of preserves. She begins the essay admitting a suburban upbringing, yet as an adult, the author does not fill her pantry

with the jams and jellies she so admired in her grandmother's storeroom, and concludes her essay by admitting she has not carried on this tradition, which is the stuff of fond childhood memories, despite its importance to her sense of identity. In the course of the essay she divides the world into half, suburban and rural, and establishes the values and practices native to each; yet despite her demonstrated preference for the rural, she ultimately situates herself somewhere in between the two worlds, looking fondly towards one world while existing mostly in the other.

Place in this essay takes on symbolic significance according to the types of activities and people that belong there. The country is where old-fashioned values reside, such that a woman takes care of her home and invests great time and effort into preparing it to entertain others. Cree's grandmother, symbolizing the country, possesses many traditional domestic skills, such as how to decorate a home, prepare a meal, pack a picnic (or the archaic "pick-nick"), tend a garden, and of course, stock a storeroom with homemade jars of jams and pickles. In contrast, the author's mother, representing suburban places, seems deficient in all these things. By offering "manufactured versions" of traditional foods, the suburbs fail to achieve and even tamper with the authenticity of what the country can offer, such as home-preserved foods. The suburbs, however, were the author's primary reality growing up, and rurality was brought into her life by her grandmother. Her identity is informed by her connection to both types of places, as a child who grew up with typical grocery store fare in the suburbs, but who was also privy to the skills and traditions associated with rural places.

Another author similarly uses place to characterize canning and her relationship to it. Sue Hopkins (2010) recalls having learned to can from a neighbor. Jake is a sad, lonely

man, but is also quietly kind: he is the sort of person "whose rhubarb pies mysteriously appeared on our doorsteps." His virtue involves cooking skills and anonymous generosity. The author wants to rescue Jake from his loneliness and finds she can connect with him through canning. She draws on place in differentiating herself from Jake, noting that Jake "grew up in Cle Elum and had lived a life that didn't remotely resemble my suburban upbringing." Cle Elum is the name of a very small town approximately ninety minutes away from Seattle, known as a place for outdoor activities like camping and hiking. She admires Jake for his rural sensibilities, which due to her "suburban upbringing" she sorely lacks. In particular, she admires the self-sufficiency she finds his upbringing has afforded him; his family "made their own wines and hooch," "hunted," "picked berries; fished in the lakes; and even set up a butcher shop in the barn." His family "used the earth as a deep freeze during winter" and of course "canned everything edible." She draws an association between the rural upbringing Jake had and his knowledge of such traditional activities and skills, and attributes her own ignorance of these skills to the place where she grew up; activities like hunting, fishing, foraging, and food preservation are native to rural places, and far less accessible to those in other types of locations.

Rural and suburban places are also differentiated according to their ways of knowing. In Jake's small-town, rural upbringing, knowledge is acquired through practical, hands-on experience and passed down through families, so that it becomes instinctual and intuitive. He shares his knowledge of food preservation as he learned it: through doing. This stands in contrast to intellectual ways of knowing. Hopkins goes about acquiring or verifying knowledge and skills in a decidedly "citified manner": she

visits a public library for books and finds an online forum with tips about canning. Comparing the two sources of information to be reassured Jake's methods are "safe," she concludes that "Jake's skills were everything you might hope. There wasn't a thing that he didn't know." Her background leads her to doubt the unfamiliar, undocumented ways of knowing that Jake possesses, needing to confirm the soundness of his methods by conferring the sources of knowledge she, as someone with a "suburban" upbringing, feels most comfortable trusting.

Hopkins also differentiates the types of relationships to the land that are characteristic of the two types of places. She describes Jake's family as having an intimate, dependent relationship with their land that she herself lacks. Jake's family relies on their food-gathering and preserving skills out of necessity. They don't just hunt, and certainly not for sport, she explains; rather, they do so "sometimes desperately." Their land is a source of food, an essential part of their livelihood. In contrast to the large tract of land Jake's family is thought to live on, the author resides on "a little quarter acre." Both because of its "little" size and "because of the old rose garden and the rest of the ornamentals" that fill her yard, she does not have room to grow any fruits or vegetables. As someone whose identity involves being a home canner, this fact warrants some accounting-for in her mind, and she defends her choices and circumstances. Rather than using her land to grow the produce she would preserve or otherwise prepare, she does buy it "organic" and "in season," yet at the same time she "worr[ies] about the state of foods we can buy." Though she seems to admire the self-sufficient practices of Jake's rural upbringing, she nevertheless uses her own land to grow flowers and buys her food elsewhere, choices perhaps consonant with her suburban identity.

Hopkins's essay reflects her ideas about what characteristics define "rural" and "suburban" or "citified" places, and how these places inform and shape the identities of the people who occupy them. Rural places are occupied by people who connect with their land in meaningful ways, and who develop skills in relation to this. The suburbs are construed as lacking such a relationship to the land, not possessing traditional skills, and approaching the development of new skills in an intellectual, literate way instead of a physical, intuitive way. In many ways, the suburbs are defined by a lack of rural traits, and it is through engaging in activities like canning that such skills can be brought into spaces to which they are not native.

In this section we have seen that place categories are made relevant by authors in defining the practice of canning as well as presenting themselves and others as certain types of people. Canning is constructed as an activity rooted in rural places, whereas authors present themselves as being from suburban places, which are largely defined by the rural characteristics they lack. Via a personal connection to someone from rural places, these authors gain access to home preservation skills and the bit of rural values they represent. By providing the biographical detail of being "from" somewhere or having a spatially defined "upbringing," authors construct "located identities" (McCabe and Stokoe 2004: 605), making place relevant in their self-presentation and construction of their own identities, and use it to make sense of skills, habits, values, preferences, and ways of knowing they and others do or do not possess. In these essays, place has "a symbolic significance around which identities are constituted and performed" (Hetherington 1998: 106), and becomes an important aspect in considering what type of practice home canning is. In the next section we see place again being drawn upon as a

symbolic resource in identity construction, this time through narrative accounts of food sourcing practices.

4.3 Food sourcing practices: the discursive construction of shared ideologies

This section looks at the narrativization of food sourcing practices as a means of discursively constituting individual and community identity. By offering stories about their food sourcing practices, authors foreground their participation in alternative food networks (AFNs), which comprise "new and rapidly mainstreaming spaces in the food economy defined by--among other things--the explosion of organic, Fair Trade, and local, quality, and premium specialty foods." (Goodman and Goodman 2009). These networks may include sites such as CSAs (community supported agriculture), food co-ops, farmers markets, "u-pick" farms, and other means of obtaining local food from those directly involved in its production. Alternative food networks serve to unite farmers or other food producers with consumers. Participation in an AFN (or other non-mainstream means of food acquisition) is a crucial part of being a competent member of this community of practice.

By constructing a discourse around food sourcing practices, members construct the community of practice as having an ideological basis, and this ideology in turn shapes the discourse practices of the community. Allen (2007) observes that "social movements are constituted in large part by their discourses. Ideologies are embedded in these discourses and shape the range of alternatives imagined and developed by the social movements" (Allen 2007: 117). Ideologies associated with AFNs, such as eating

seasonally and locally, and being environmentally sensitive, are expressed through the narratives authors tell about their food sourcing practices.

Where a person gets their food suggests a good deal about who they are, and gives a particular meaning to that food. A food's source, how it was grown, and how it was acquired, all impart meaning to the food and to those who choose to consume it; a bunch of kale takes on different meanings depending on whether it was bought at a chain grocery store, a health food store, a farmer's market, or was grown in one's own backyard. This section focuses on how stories about food sourcing practices function as a means for performing important food-related identities and in turn for characterizing the community of practice as ideologically oriented. How these places are constructed—the features used to characterize them, the author's relationship to these places, and the people who participate in these places and their affiliated processes—contributes to the production of these "minor identities."

The essay "Plums from Heaven" (Gilbert 2009) calls attention to the notion of "local" as it narrates a day participating in an unusual method of obtaining fruit for canning. A "group of...volunteers" assembles in a neighborhood for a "harvesting party," during which ripe fruit is picked from trees whose owners cannot care for them anymore; half of the fruit is donated to a food bank and the other half is distributed amongst the volunteers. Gilbert is among the volunteers who have assembled that day to pick fruit from neighborhood trees: "[W]e have come on bikes and rattly cars...to stand on the sidewalk with odd harvesting sticks and try our mightiest to dislodge on the perfectly purpley ripe plums." The designation "volunteer" emphasizes the community orientation and altruistic nature of the group, which is further emphasized by the author's declaration

that "we are here for charity." Naming bicycles as a mode of transportation suggests both the localness and the environmental orientation of the group, and along with the older models of cars identified produces a group identity that does not value such material possessions. To such a "party" one might very well don "grubby running shoes you've worn for the occasion," suggesting these people adhere to a physical fitness regime, and care about such things. And despite the mess the overripe plums make as they land on and amongst the group of volunteers, no one complains, because "after all this is free," again highlighting a non-materialistic mentality among the participants. The group is constructed as possessing a social conscience and eschewing materialism, and use of the first person plural ("we") throughout the narrative suggests the author perceives herself to be similar to the other volunteers: "we are a group," "we have come on bikes," "we are not very good at this," "we are here for charity."

The essay constructs the process of food sourcing as importantly rooted in the local neighborhood. Place is very important in this process of food sourcing, and being local, close to home, interacting with members of one's neighborhood are all elements that highlight the importance of place. The harvesting party that day takes place at two different locations, the first of which being "this corner of Southeast Yamhill," which is a residential street in Portland. This specificity owes both to the imagined audience for whom Gilbert is writing, as many CAA members, particularly founding members, are from the Pacific Northwest region of the country, and also to the importance the author places on being local, doing things locally, and not going to a conventional grocery store or even a fancy farmer's market when there is perfectly good (or at least, can-able) fruit in her very own neighborhood. This corner, she notes, is "seven blocks from my

childhood home," showing her connection to this neighborhood. The second location of the day "is in my neighborhood, too, in the patio of an unusual business I've passed many times but never visited." Gilbert emphasizes her relationship to this place by using the first person possessive, "*my* neighborhood." She identifies herself as a local community member, one who recognizes (if not patronizes) the local businesses. Laying claim to this area as *her* neighborhood, home to both her current and childhood residence, plays into the construction of "local" as something more intimate than simply attending a farmer's market, highlighting the importance of looking nearby for food resources. Gilbert thereby constructs herself as a resourceful person with strong ties to her community and her neighborhood.

The organizer of this "party" is described with admiration for her specific, enviable type of coolness. She is "a little bit famous, in that Portland-est of ways," having "been quoted in the *New York Times*," and shares bit of wisdom like "A fruit tree is really made for sharing with your neighborhood," which perfectly sums up the value of local-ness the author conveys in her essay. The author again highlights locality while expressing her approval of the party's organizer, expressing a distinct sense of what it means to be from Portland. She described the organizer as wearing "a t-shirt that's so muted it screams 'sustainable rock star,' green on American Apparel heathery green." The mutedness of the t-shirt she details echoes the qualities of the bicycles, cars, and running shoes the group owns: old, faded, and reflective of people who value what is in some way 'authentic' rather than new and contrived. These possessions correspond with the practices the group engages in during this harvesting party: being volunteers, obtaining fruit for free, working with one's hands, and getting a bit dirty while doing it.

The essay mostly tells the story of harvesting fruit, only at the end making clear that the plums were going to be made into jam. Surely "harvesting parties" are an unusual, possibly enjoyable way to acquire one's fruit, and deserving of narrative attention for that reason alone, but this essay also pays the process of food sourcing so much attention because it is an immensely important component of a home canner's repertoire in this community of practice. These harvesting parties require more effort than simply going to a farmer's market and are more valued as they reflect a "can-do" spirit. Home canning for this community serves the purpose of taking control of one's food supply, and being the one who picks the fruit, from its humble residential tree, is worthy of particular admiration in this community. The community constructs canning as a way to go back to an imagined simpler time, when more things were done by hand; the active, local, grassroots nature of a harvesting party perfectly embodies this. "Local" as this essay constructs it is perhaps the very height of "local"—only blocks from the author's childhood and current homes—involving community in meaningful ways, from the volunteers who assemble to pick the fruit, to the organization (the Portland Fruit Tree Project) that coordinated the day, to the neighbors whose trees are being gleaned. These elements of local-ness and community are highlighted to draw attention to the particular identity objectives of the author and also the community for which her essay is written. This community of practice's values are reflected in these guest essays, and this essay constructs an individual and a group who care about community and local food, the more local the better. It also constructs the author (and the group of volunteers with whom she works) as not valuing material things like nice cars, but rather as being comfortable doing activities for free, transporting oneself by bike, and being comfortable getting dirty and

using one's hands. There is a sense of connection to the earth, the fruit, and each step of the canning process demonstrated in this essay. The author obtains the fruit by her own labor, uses her hands to pick and transport the fruit and later cook it and put it into jars, all the while not involving herself in the purchasing of either fruit or jam. Seeing the process through from start to finish is also a demonstration of skills the author has developed, old-fashioned and unfettered by conventional methods of food acquisition such as shopping at grocery stores.

In another essay, "My Small Batch Life," Payne (2010) begins by telling a brief story of her initiation into canning: "I began canning last year around this time after rolling a crate of peaches 'seconds' home on a luggage cart from the farmer's market, 14 pounds to be exact." In this brief description the author reveals certain aspects of her identity. Payne indicates that she lives near enough to a farmer's market to walk there, which says she is most likely a city dweller. In addition, she brings the 14 pounds of fruit home with a cart in tow, rather than driving a car, and by doing so is making an environmentally sound decision. The "seconds" she buys are acceptable in jam-making because they will be cooked down, but her mentioning this also highlights herself as a resourceful person, and perhaps a frugal one, too. These highlighted qualities of resourcefulness and frugality echo the previous essay; through the storytelling of each individual emerge a bigger picture about the values and aspects of identity that are valued within this community. Being a home canner in this community involves mastery of a number of practices, the first step of which being the preferred way of acquiring fruit for preservation. This typically means participation in an alternative food network. By narrativizing their food sourcing experiences, members signal their political and ethical

concerns related to the food supply and thereby construct their community as one that is largely based on ideological resistance to the dominant agricultural paradigm. The ways places in alternative food networks are constructed serve as ways for members to perform their identities and also align themselves with the community. By narrativizing methods of food procurement, members construct what it means to be a competent home canner, creating a body of knowledge which both constructs and informs the community's practices.

In Jeanne Sauvage's (2010) essay about canning, a recollection of one day's food sourcing activities involves space being used as a symbolic resource. In this essay, the author narrates a transaction between a few fellow canners and a farmer, to purchase some fruit for canning. A group of canners, including several CAA founders, waits in the back of a grocery store parking lot for a farmer to arrive with a large quantity of fruit.

The author and her companions occupy a space located in the back of "a Safeway [national grocery store chain] parking lot." More than just a "neutral grid" (Gupta and Ferguson 2006) over which the narrative action unfolds, this space is presented as a topic of discourse. The author characterizes the group according to their physical location as well as in what ways they do and do not belong in this space. In addition, the imposition of a 'drug deal' frame serves to highlight the subversiveness of their activities.

While the group of home canners are "for the most part, middle aged" and one person "has a toddler," the people normatively associated with occupying this space are ostensibly younger and do not have children, nor do they bring them to this space. By reiterating that "[w]e sure didn't look like your average hang-around-in-back-corners-of-parking-lot-types," the author both serves to contrast their appearance with this imagined

group of people who occupy this space, as well as draw attention to the fact that they are engaging in a certain kind of questionable or unusual behavior. Spaces are linked to and defined by the people normatively associated with them and the behaviors they are imagined to engage in. The regions of a parking lot are seen to carry social meaning; standing in the back of the parking lot, the group is described as feeling "uncomfortable--worried that someone would bust us for parking in the lot without going to the store."

In a store parking lot, patrons normally park in the front portion of the lot, nearest the store, and enter the building to go shopping. The back of the parking lot is constructed here as a place for those with different intentions, which Sauvage highlights by imposing a 'drug deal' frame on the scene. As the group waits for "the goods" ("top of the line stuff" in fact) to arrive with their "supplier," they fear getting someone might "bust" them for assembling in the parking lot without engaging in the expected actions, which would be to enter the store. The drug deal frame functions to compare and contrast the group of canners' identity with the characteristics normatively associated with the sorts of people the author imagines do inhabit those places. While the group is not in fact engaging in illegal activities, the author is constructing their identities as subversive in a different way, rejecting the mainstream food system. Sauvage imbues this space in the back of the parking lot with meaning, and then plays with expectations and assumptions about the space in order to accomplish some identity work. She establishes what type of people belong there and which kind do not, and situates her group as somewhere in between—while they do not fit the appearance of people one might expect to hang around in such back corners, her group is in fact flouting convention and engaging in acts mildly subversive in their own way.

It has been argued that in these essays, space and place are "dynamically constructed" (Benwell and Stokoe 2006) through discourse, and put to use in making identity claims. Moreover, space and place "can take on a symbolic significance around which identities are constituted and performed" (Hetherington 1998: 106). The excerpts from Sauvage's (2010) narrative exemplify these notions: places are ascribed meanings in order to accomplish important identity work relating to the author and her companions that day. Places are defined according to who belongs and who does not, and what activities are associated with that space. Making space a topic of discourse allows the author to establish the group as being of a certain age and appearance, and also to express their ideological rejection of the mainstream food system.

The language used to construct the farmer the group is waiting to meet is also a significant means by which the author accomplishes her identity. She constructs an idealized version of the farmer, whom she and her companions seem to admire very much. The group's exaggerated admiration of the farmer serves to align them with the values the farmer is constructed to possess. The preternaturally wholesome character of the farmer stands in stark contrast with the seamy activities of the drug deal frame, and he is constructed so as to embody many of the values implicitly recognized by these home canners. His name is James Michael, but the author refers to him with an honorific before his first name: "Farmer James." This title makes his farmer identity salient in the discourse, an identity that deserves celebration. In appearance he is everything a movie star version of a farmer should be: "tall, handsome, clean-cut, and dressed in a plaid flannel shirt." And like fans clamoring for a moment with their favorite movie star, the group is portrayed as feeling immediately drawn to him: "We had never met him before,

but he was like an old friend. We all hugged him and took our photos with him." Beyond being "handsome" and quite friendly, the farmer is described as driving a Toyota Prius, an electric hybrid car, a narrative detail so important as to be mentioned twice. Farmer James is, to the author, all things good and wholesome: attractive, kind, and environmentally considerate. Environmental awareness is one of many values driving the local food movement, which the canning community supports through its focus on using local sources of produce in their canning projects.

The author marvels at the aesthetic qualities of the produce Farmer James has brought them: it is "extremely fresh and amazing" and "so pretty." In addition to introducing her canning narrative with the story of how she acquired the fruit she would later can, the author reiterates the importance of this fruit at two subsequent points in the narrative. She introduces the main part of her narrative, in which she describes the day she and a few other CAA founders assembled for a day of canning, by reminding the reader they would be "using the fruit we got from Farmer James." And later, at the day's conclusion, the participants "[sang] Farmer James' praises for providing us with the fruit we transformed into jars of summer for the winter months ahead." Fruit worthy of being canned is fresh, locally sourced, and from a person rather than an impersonal grocery store. Good fruit is also canned while in season and saved for a later time when it will presumably be unavailable—not because it cannot be found in a grocery store, but because of a commitment to buy only that which is seasonal and local. For it is only such a personal commitment that would prohibit an individual from, say, bringing home

organic asparagus grown in South America for a winter's meal[7] when it is otherwise readily available in the grocery store. Discourse about the aesthetic and seasonal qualities of the fruit they obtained from the farmer establishes the group as both discerning of the quality of produce, as well as the environmental impacts of the choices they make in acquiring produce to can.

This idealization of the farmer reflects in part what Allen (2007) calls a "farm centrism" (119) that often characterizes the ideology of alternative agrifood movements. Farm centrism entails privileging the farmer over other workers involved in food production as well as "traditional agrarian notions of the ideal of the family farm and traditional rural values" (Allen 2007:119) as well as "elements such as community and cooperation that resonate with the progressive character of the alternative agrifood movements" (Allen 2007:121). The ideals of "community and cooperation" are apparent throughout this narrative, as when the group assembles both to pick up their fruit and to can it a few days later, as well as throughout many of the other essays on the CAA website.

Where a food is from and how it is acquired are important to the meaning of that food as understood by members of the CAA community, and contributes in important ways to the identity of the person who ultimately transforms that food into jam or pickles. 'Appropriate' food sourcing practices are as much a part of the repertoire of a competent home canner as knowing how to sterilize a jar; whether through a grassroots-organized harvesting party in one's own neighborhood; wheeling a luggage cart home from a farmer's market; or foregoing the produce section of a grocery store in favor of meeting a

[7] This is an example from Michael Pollan's *Omnivore's Dilemma* about the contested meaning of "organic."

farmer in person; finding unconventional ways of obtaining produce allows community members to display their competence and creativity and demonstrate a connection to their local community, however they conceive of it. Identity, according to Wenger, is "a display of competence" (Wenger 1998: 152), in that in the context of a community of practice, membership is based on a constellation of competencies. Knowing where the best fruit can be found, what is in season, what is native to one's locale, and what organizations or individuals can provide access to the best produce are all ways for members to demonstrate their unique forms of competence, and individuates them in the community of practice. Narrating the means by which individuals go about obtaining fruit for canning reveals information about their attitude toward material possessions, connections to their community and environment, physical abilities, and aesthetic values: picking plums from your neighbor's tree while wearing old running shoes reveals a different sort of person than one who sets up a meeting with a farmer who drives all day in his Prius to meet them. Through telling stories about where they obtain their produce for canning, community members make sense of themselves and respond to the ideological basis of their enterprise.

4.4 Summary

In these excerpts, we see that the roles of space and place move beyond mere "settings" for narrative action; instead, space and place are dynamically constructed for use as a discursive resource in characterizing selves and practices. The discursive construction of space and place in these narratives is central to the authors' formulation of their identities; as Georgakopoulou (2003) found in her analysis of the discourse of

Greek teenagers, "[a]rticulating place (and its associated time frames) in narrative is inextricably bound up with articulating identities" (Georgakopoulou 2003: 425). Discursive uses of place in the CAA essays are used in ways that are socially and symbolically significant to the speaker and, more importantly, to the community in which the authors are demonstrating membership.

5. Time as a symbolic resource in home-canning narratives

Like place, time is also a key resource in formulating members' identities. This chapter considers the element of time in the stories home canners tell about themselves and their practices. On the one hand, canning is constructed by the CAA community as a brand-new phenomenon of sorts, as the revolutionary lexicon demonstrates: "canvolution," "canvolutionary," "commando canning," and "canning adventure." Its newness is a selling point in the canning discourse, a way to spread the word and engage new members, and disassociate it from an image of grandparents engaged in kitchen drudgery. The radical lexicon also foregrounds the political and social bases of the home-canning movement, from eating locally to rejecting mainstream food networks. On the other hand, CAA discourse about canning embraces a nostalgic look back on the 'good old days,' remembered or imagined, in which canning was a ubiquitous household activity, undertaken by resourceful folks as a matter of necessity. Nostalgia more than balances the radical lexicon in the discursive construction of canning as a practice rooted in the past. From fond memories of picking berries last summer, to tender memories of canning as a child with parents or grandparents, to imagining a 'lost time' when canning was an unquestioned kitchen practice, canning evokes a look back. Nostalgia functions as

a means of highlighting what matters most to these authors in their home-canning practices and also serves to construct authors' relationship to the practice.

5.1 Background

Time, like place, is discursively constructed through narrative and used as a resource by which CAA participants formulate their identities. Specifically, authors use a past time to construct their present realities; as Ochs (1997) observes: "Narrative serves the important function of bringing the past into the present time consciousness" (191). Indeed, nostalgia for a past time plays an important role in how the authors make sense of their present selves and practices.

Nostalgia in narrative can play an important role in identity construction. In a study of discourse amongst faculty at a Turkish university, Brown and Humphreys (2002) argue that the invocation of nostalgia is key to understanding individual and institutional or group identity. Key findings of this study are that "groups assemble shared storylines that subjectively constitute their own collective identity" and "the different ways in which acts of collective nostalgia can inform the stories by which individuals and groups understand their present circumstances" (Brown 2002: 141). Nostalgia can also function as a way for individuals to express their desire to belong to a community (Brown 2002: 147), a theme of particular relevance to the present study.

A good deal of research has considered the link between food and nostalgia. For example, Swislocki (2009) defines the term "culinary nostalgia" in his study of regional food cultures in China as "the recollection or purposive evocation of another time and place through food" (1). He analyzes examples of this nostalgia in the discourses found in

written sources such as guidebooks and literature and considers culinary nostalgia as it evolved over a period of many centuries of Shanghai's history. This study concludes that "regional food culture was intrinsic to how Chinese connected to the past, lived in the present, and imagined a future" (Swislocki 2009: 2).

In his survey of anthropological literature on food and memory, Holtzman (2006) remarks on several themes relevant to the current discussion. One such theme is food and identity, namely "ethnic" identity (a term which is rightly problematized), and the ways in which food can serve to maintain an ethnic identity when an ethnic community does not exist in a particular context. Another notable theme is that of "gustatory nostalgia," such as that for a lost past to which food serves as the connection: "Some food literature...relies on a lay notion of sentimentality for a lost past, viewing food as a vehicle for recollections of childhood and family" (Holtzman 2006: 367). Such "food-centered reminiscences...may also be seen as a longing for times and places that one has never experienced" (*ibid.*). The study concludes by considering why the link between food and memory is so strong; food is "deeply symbolic, sensuous, psychological, and social" (Holtzman 2006: 373) and "offers a potential window into forms of memory that are...heteroglossic, ambivalent, layered, and textured" (373-74). Holtzman's survey makes apparent the interest among scholars of anthropology in investigating the relationship between food and memory in general, and food and nostalgia in particular.

In the following section I consider the role that discursively constructed time plays in identity formulation, and how this informs and reflects the spirit of the community. From recollections of childhood trips, to last summer's berries, to nostalgia

for a lost time, the past plays an important role in constructing CAA participants' understanding of their present selves and practices.

5.2 Nostalgia in canning narratives: Constructing the present through the past

CAA participants use the discursive construction of time, specifically nostalgia for a past time, in formulating their identities. Nostalgia, or longing for another time or place, comes about in several ways in the home-canning narratives. In the smallest way, these essays express nostalgia for the season, typically summer, when the preserved food was processed. One author explains that "fresh peaches may be a fleeting seasonal pleasure, but doused in alcohol, they become…a glimpse back to the warmth of summer on a cold winter's evening" (Forkner 2009). In the essay "Summer in a Jar", author Mina Williams reminisces as she enjoys some jam she made the previous summer:

> Nothing can compare to that first taste of blackberry jam on the tip of your tongue. It snaps you back to the very day you hand picked the fruit, fighting off the stickers while working toward the goal of changing the ping of the berries hitting the bottom of your pale into the soft plop of fruit hitting fruit. You recall the special sweetness of those berries on that hot summer day. The jam brings to mind the scent of dry grass in August and summons the feel of the warm sun on your cheeks. Indeed, homemade jam is summer in a jar. (Williams 2011)

For this author, the taste of the jam evokes all of the sensory experiences of the particular time the jam was made, from the effort expended picking the berries to the scents and sensations of the summer season. Another author recalls summers spent in Austria making jam with friends: "Months later, on winter mornings before work, I would stand in pajamas at the kitchen counter for breakfast, look out of the window at the dark, and eat a giant spoonful of jam on a muffin. I felt like I was eating summer"

(Slattery 2009). Both authors connect the act of eating jam to the memories of its making, and specifically, jam enjoyed in winter when it can remind one of the warmer months. These passages demonstrate the link authors construct between past times, specifically summer in these instances, and home canning. Canning is constructed as a way of preserving memories and of reconnecting with a pleasant time of year. Thinking back to a summer of fruit picking and preserving also functions as a way to highlight the political and social dimensions of their enterprise. These recollections highlight the community's and individuals' commitment to using seasonal produce, so that in winter, the taste of a summer fruit is a treat that was created by their own hands. They appreciate the preserves both on an aesthetic level and an ethical one. As Johnston and Baumann (2010) observe, food is subject to evaluation according to "both aesthetic and moral criteria" (129) by so-called "foodies," and relishing the taste of a jam while recalling the labors involved in its production addresses both of these criteria.

This way of remembering is a part of the CAA community's discursive repertoire. Telling stories about eating jam and thinking back to the summer it was made is in part a way community members express why they like being home canners. For all the hard work of picking fruit, preparing it, preparing the jars, and then finally setting them aside in the pantry—instead of simply buying a jar at the store—the payoff is later, on a cold day, to remember the efforts and pleasures of the day the fruit was fresh and being put into jars. This fond look back multiplies the pleasure of tasting one's homemade jam the first time; it is a defense against those who would ask why one would make a jar of jam when it is easily purchased. Mild nostalgia for the summer months echoes a larger

nostalgia for times past, for a remembered or imagined tradition, which we will see in the following section.

Some authors take the seasonality discourse farther and allude to imagined circumstances in which home food preservation was done for survival, so that a family could have food to eat outside of the harvest time. While these are not the circumstances of the writers, who are "leisure canners" (Atkinson 2009), the authors linguistically construct their canning practices as involving this element of survival, and in this way construct the meaning of the practice in which they engage. One author describes times in her childhood when her grandmother would visit and she, her mother, and her sisters would spend the day picking berries at a local "u-pick" field, then processing the berries into jam. This daylong event would make "enough strawberry and raspberry freezer jam to get four households through to the next year" (Cree 2009). This passage not only indicates the large amount of jam that was processed on such days, but also the notion of jam getting a family "through to the next year" alludes to a time, imagined by the author, when summer's produce had to be canned so that there would be fruit and vegetables available in the winter. One certainly does not preserve jam to provide a family's nutrition over the winter season; this family enjoyed it "eaten over ice cream, with cake, or smothering biscuits with whipped cream," in other words, as a condiment, not an essential foodstuff. However, the author construes their jam making as being somehow essential to surviving the winter, perhaps as a way to elevate the practice her grandmother taught her, but perhaps also as a way of connecting with the imagined tradition of canning, which was done out of need rather than for enjoyment. The berries that remained after jam-making were frozen and "saved for fruitless times in winter." These

"fruitless" times again evoke an imagined (rather than experienced) tradition in which canning served the purpose of preserving produce in times of abundance for later times, particularly winter, when families would rely on produce stored in root cellars and canned items for most of their meals. The author's language of canning for survival serves to connect her to what she imagines this tradition to have begun as, and extends that tradition farther back than her own experience with it. Cree notes that her own mother was not as traditional and skilled as her grandmother was, and that jam-making was a special summer activity, requiring trips to the "u-pick" fields to obtain the berries for making jam. Therefore, "fruitless" describes not her own situation but seems rather to recall a time in her imagination, which she incorporates into her understanding of home food preservation practices. And in doing so, she constructs herself as having a particular identity with respect to home canning, specifically a person who appreciates the nostalgic elements of the enterprise: the need to preserve food, times of going without, and eating in accord with the seasons. Canning, for this author, invites a romantic look back to an imagined past and an imagined tradition.

This deep connection with the discursively constructed past is one of the appeals of home canning for its members. Cree submits her essay as an example of positive canning memories, though she herself, a well-regarded pastry chef, has not participated in traditional food preservation since she was a child: "It aches just a little to sit and paint this collection of memories without new ones to add." While she vows to restart the tradition she learned as a child, in the mean time "the memories and traditions my grandma left behind her will help hold me tight, part of the thread that weaves me together. These memories wait, preparing to become part of my life, waiting for another

someone to pass them on to." The author refers to making freezer jam as "memories and traditions" rather than, say, skills, which reflects the important role nostalgia plays in her relationship to home preservation methods. Home preserving is about people, memories, and the notion of "tradition" as the author conceives of it - both the set of skills she learned from her grandmother, and the imagined set of circumstances, motivations, and practices that are reflected in her romantic, need-based version of canning. And though she is not a practitioner of home preservation methods herself, she considers her canning memories to be part of her identity.

Cree feels that living as a single person she lacks a primary motivator to make jam at home: she is "waiting for another someone to pass" her "memories and traditions" along to. For her, home canning is ostensibly less about the product and more about participating in the process with family members—engaging in a 'tradition' for its own sake. Tradition is a way of connecting with family: her grandmother taught her, and she one day hopes to "begin tradition anew" when she herself has a family. Home preservation is a way of connecting with a real and imagined tradition, and tradition itself imbues home preservation practices with meaning.

Other authors position themselves differently in relation to their canning practices: they are not sentimental about such an imagined, romantic past, and set out to adapt the practice of canning to their own reality of abundance: as food bloggers/activists, CAA community members are not worried about where their next meal will come from, nor are they living off their own farm and unable to obtain produce—out of season, even—at their local grocery store. Instead, they are ideologically motivated appreciators of food, and are willing, in the name of quality if not frugality, to do the work to produce

food items like jams and pickles, versions of which may be readily bought at the store. Participating in alternative food networks and home canning can be mutually reinforcing activities: AFNs provide the freshest seasonal produce, and canning is an excellent way to make use of any surplus. One author recognizes this difference between the circumstances facing today's home canners compared to those whose tradition they are following, who probably canned both for the craft of it but also out of some degree of necessity, so as not to waste food they had grown themselves. Payne (2010) recognizes this difference between the typical motivation and circumstances of previous generations of home canners and those reviving this tradition today: "The fact is, this scenario (loads of ripe produce needing to be stored for the future) is not *modus operandi* like it used to be a half-century ago. Most of us have to seek out abundance, drive to u-pick deals, and fork over some cash for quality, local produce." Payne sets herself apart from the nostalgic home canners by acknowledging the means by which most canners obtain their produce - not from their own farms or gardens, but rather from another place, purchased for the purpose of canning. Produce doesn't "need" to be stored: necessity is not part of the way this author constructs her vision of the home-canning enterprise. Instead, she recognizes that a part of the canning practice for "most" people today is "seeking out" fresh, local produce, in contrast with the circumstances of "a half-century ago." She identifies a timeframe in which canning was one way, based on necessity, and contrasts that time with today's circumstances. She defines her relationship to the enterprise in a very different way from the way Cree (2009) does; Payne commits to "super-small batch canning projects" because they "fit into the context of my normal life." Rather than disrupt her "normal life" with "a hot, toiling, and potentially expensive hobby," she has

"made canning my own." Payne insists upon adapting the tradition to her life, and not the other way around, something she would be in danger of doing if she did not scale down her canning projects in order to fit them in between the "dinner dishes" and "climbing into bed with a good book." Her identity as a home canner is no-nonsense: unlike other home canners, she does not wish to fill each pantry shelf with jars of jams and pickles, nor does she want her canning projects to disrupt her routine. Canning, while rooted in tradition, is an adaptable hobby, and she is not interested in the sentimental aspect of it that some others are. She rejects the characterization of canning proposed by someone like Cree (2009), who perhaps relies on nostalgia because she does not actually can.

Another writer shares this perspective, acknowledging that "[t]he serious days of canning might be over, but for a new generation, the age of leisure canning has just begun" (Atkinson 2009). Canning is no longer a "serious" affair, alluding to either a time or a discourse in which canning was done for sustenance rather than "leisure." While Atkinson proudly describes a makeshift second pantry whose shelves "overflowed with jars," making a "sparkling patchwork," soon after learning to can, he echoes Payne's small-batch canning philosophy that "[i]t is no longer necessary, nor practical to make twenty quarts of applesauce or tomatoes; but six jars of organic, Washington grown blackberry jam, or twelve pints of pickles are prized possessions in the cupboard." That is it "no longer" this way again alludes to the imagined time (one not experienced by the author or ostensibly anyone they know) in which canning, particularly large-batch canning, was "necessary" and "practical."

The essay by Forkner (2009) orients very strongly to the traditional, nostalgic aspects of canning, yet attempts to reconcile them with present practices. The author

considers home preservation methods to have been a necessary skill set "for our grandparents and great-grandparents," which were "customarily…passed from generation to generation along with grandmother's china, family stories, and a tendency toward red hair or blue eyes." She imagines a time when the tradition of canning experienced an uninterrupted flow in its transmission from the older to the younger members of a family, in contrast to the current reality in which people learn to can from friends or from events hosted by groups like CAA.

So essential and practical a skill was canning that it was, in Forkner's vision, "a routine part of housekeeping." After "harvest[ing] crops in the fall," Forkner imagines, families "stored enough food to get them through to the next harvest." Forkner constructs canning as having been an indispensable means of providing food for a family year-round, as recently as just a couple of generations ago. Canning, for these imagined previous generations, is understood as a necessity, a means of survival, and a skill of self-reliance, as opposed to the role it holds in the lives of the canners of her imagined audience. Canning flourished, in Forkner's mind, at a time when all, most, or some families were thought to have produced all their own food. In this imagined lost time, people were self-reliant, capable, and resourceful. Families maintained these skills from one generation to the next as a matter of course. The way this author constructs the tradition of home preservation incorporates all of these elements.

Modern generations, in contrast, have re-adopted some of these traditional preserving methods: "Today preserving is enjoying renewed popularity and extending the harvest is HIP!" The home canners of today are, Forkner says, motivated by "food safety" and "an unstable economy" as they "look back at these nearly-lost kitchen arts."

The author's language emphasizes the continuity of this tradition - home-canning skills were merely "nearly lost," not forgotten altogether - and continuity is an important aspect of asserting something as a tradition at all. Readers are connected to this practice by "our grandparents," and while this author admits there may have been a brief interruption or waning in the practice of home canning, the tradition has not been broken - it is "nearly lost," but not entirely so. If it were entirely lost, it could not rightly be called a tradition. Home preservation practices are not antiquated, Forkner explains, merely "somewhat old-school," and we are not learning a new skill set, but rather "re-learn[ing] the resourceful ways of generations that came before us." By *re*-learning home preservation methods, rather than just learning them, the author constructs a continuity in the practice: by some blood relation, perhaps a generational connection ("our grandparents" in general, if not technically mine or yours), or simply a connection established through knowledge—words, consumption—of canned goods, we do not have to *learn* these skills anew, as they are not really new at all; rather, home preservation skills are familiar enough to us that we need only a refresher to adopt them into our own lives.

The author achieves two things by constructing home canning in this fashion. On the one hand, she makes plenty of room for nostalgia for a lost time, an imagined time in which people relied on their own skills for their day-to-day survival, a time when people possessed the skills so many lack today. This imagined time and these imagined people may be just distant enough that we have heard about their homemade pickles or their root cellars, but do not actually know anyone who lived this way. The author speaks of "generations" and "grandparents" without any specific reference to her own, and this vagueness serves the broad characterization she gives these people and this time.

However, the author also speaks reassuringly about the modern appeal of canning. She balances her reminiscences with an overt attempt to characterize canning as "hip," declaring that "'canvolution' has quickly entered the digital lexicon." The modern practice of canning is both fashionable, she assures the reader, while also capturing some important elements from canning's past. Home canners, then, are both "hip" and "somewhat old-fashioned" in revivifying the practice. They are at the forefront of a "canvolution" that is "rich in flavor and tradition," nostalgic for the past yet embracing the present through a focus on food quality and community.

By defining the "tradition" they are renewing, the community is defining important parts of its enterprise: why they do what they do, who they want to be, who they understand themselves to be, and what they understand their purpose to be. Connecting with the past imbues their enterprise and the practices they establish in the pursuit of this enterprise with meaning. Recalling picking blackberries last summer, or canning with friends, or imagining a way of doing and being that they wish to return to, just a bit, today—all of these means of connecting with a lost time, real or imagined, provide an important measure of meaning to the practices of this group. They can recall their hard work and find satisfaction in saving a jar of jam in the pantry. They can remember with tenderness a family member, most often a grandparent, showing them the techniques they may have since forgotten. They can imagine a lost time when a jar of jam wasn't so easily purchased off a grocery shelf and instead reflected the labor and resourcefulness of a family member, or perhaps their own hard work. Nostalgia—be it looking back months, years, or indefinitely—tinges the stories canners tell because it makes canning sentimental, meaningful, not just a newfangled or resurrected kitchen

technique but something with authenticity, a history, and roots. Canning is not about immediate satisfaction but just the opposite - delaying gratification, filling one's pantry with a summer's labor to enjoy on a winter day, is a matter of pride in resisting a fast-paced world. In a society where everything can be acquired "now," canning, and the nostalgia surrounding it, even the odd wishfulness that this jar of strawberry jam was somehow keeping a family fed this week, gives home canners a sense of deep purpose, a mission, a way of doing something virtuous, time tested, and respectable. A jar of jam can be made to represent one's fondest childhood memories, the warmth of a carefree summer, or a time when things were done differently, more in tune with nature and by one's own labor.

5.3 Summary

This chapter has considered the importance of discursively constructed time in how authors conceive of and present themselves through narrative. The construction of various pasts serves to inform author's understanding of the present in meaningful ways; as Ochs (1997) notes, "narratives that touch on past events are always about the present and future as well" (191). In choosing what story to tell, what narrative elements to include, and how to articulate them, authors make relevant certain aspects of identity; in other words, "the practice of narration involves the 'doing' of identity, and because we can tell different stories we can construct different versions of the self" (Benwell and Stokoe 2006: 138). By foregrounding and discursively constructing particular past times, the authors' stories "produce a sense of identity coherence by incorporating notions of connectedness and temporal unity" (ibid.). The past is made relevant to present

circumstances through the temporally unifying nature of narrative, contributing to the community repertoire a shared history that offers a potential for shared ways of conceiving of their common enterprise.

6. Concluding discussion

6.1 Time, place, and identity at work

A good deal of this thesis has been spent considering the ways CAA participants use place and time as symbolic resources in constructing their identities, yet I have also argued that it is through these narratives of personal experience that participants construct their community as well. The individual and the community are not at odds, however; in Wenger's (1998) framework, "the concept of identity serves as a pivot between the social and the individual" (145), so that by talking about individual identity, we are also talking about community identity, and that membership in a community is an important part of how individuals formulate their identities. Understanding identity in terms of social groupings results from "viewing the very definition of individuality as something that is part of the practices of specific communities" (Wenger 1998: 146). Thus in these narratives, CAA participants formulate their identities as community members, establishing their credentials as more or less competent home canners, and this "minor," food-related identity ties into and contributes to a larger sense of self that includes "major" identity components, e.g. age, gender, ethnicity, and sexual preference (Lakoff 2006: 143) as well as membership in a variety of communities:

> Individual identity is based in a multiplicity of memberships in different communities of practice - in the range of endeavors and practices that emerge from them, in the range of forms of participation that the individual enjoys in each community, and in the ways in which the individual comes to articulate these multiple memberships. (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 1992: 466)

Self-definition emerges through the experience of participating in communities of practice (Wenger 1998: 149), and through narrative, or "stories of identity" (Wenger 1998: 187), participants define themselves as members, exploring how their experiences of participation both fit into and help define the community.

This study has examined the way that a collection of individuals discursively constructs a community of practice through narrative. It has first argued that while geographically dispersed, CAA participants have myriad ways of engaging with others in such a way as to sustain the mutual engagement that partially defines a community of practice. I have looked at one such element of engagement, the "Guest Essay," in which the most competent, central members of the CAA community engage in narrative storytelling, which has the dual and related functions of constructing themselves as certain types of people while also constructing the community itself by substantiating their membership in it.

The analysis of these narratives has focused on just two of many resources authors draw on in doing identity work. Specifically, the analysis has focused on the way the discursive constructions of time and place are used by CAA participants in formulating their identities as community members. The narrativization of food sourcing practices is one means by which authors construct the ideological basis of their community; participation in alternative food networks or other nontraditional food

sourcing practices marks a participant as a highly competent community member who understands that the methods used to obtain foods for canning are at least as important as those used in preparing jars of jam. Place is also an important resource as authors define canning and their relation to it in terms of suburban versus rural place affiliation. Suburban places are marked as inauthentic, limiting places, while rurality is idealized as a source of positive traditions and unfettered ways of knowing.

Time, like place, is also discursively constructed as a symbolic resource in the formulation of identity and community. CAA canning narratives frequently draw on a sense of nostalgia in characterizing the practice of canning, varying from a wistful look back at last summer's blackberry picking to a romanticized 'lost time' in which people knew important traditional skills like food preservation. Through canning, participants can connect to these lost times, but the constructed element of time also allows authors to formulate their present realities and clarify the nature of their enterprise.

Participation in a community gives rise to a shared perspective—not so much a unified worldview, but rather "a tendency to come up with certain interpretations, to engage in certain actions, to make certain choices, to value certain experiences - all by virtue of participating in certain enterprises." (153) The similar ways in which space and time are invoked as symbolic resources reflects this shared perspective, which develops over time as a group of people come together in mutual engagement and as part of the development of shared repertoires. In other words, these common discursive practices are evidence that a CAA participants have developed into a community of practice.

6.2 Directions for further research

A primary goal of this thesis has been to address the gap in research on the complex relationships among food, language, and identity. Lakoff's (2006) investigation of how "minor," food-related identities are worked out in discourse has made a significant contribution, yet this area of study has remained under-examined. Food-related matters will continue to receive scholarly attention as the public concerns themselves ever more with the preparation and politics of food. As sociology and anthropology have already done, new interdisciplinary undertakings like the field of food studies will continue to turn a scholarly eye to the social, cultural, and political aspects of food. Two main avenues of research are suggested. First, language and identity in food-related discourse is a wide-open possibility for further research. Lakoff (2006) paved the way for this promising line of research, and this field of inquiry remains under-represented in the literature. Television cooking programs, a growing body of amateur food blogs, and non-fiction books and documentaries reflect the public's sustained interest in food matters and offer a wealth of data for research in language, food, and identity.

The second recommendation for future research is the application of the community of practice framework to discourse analysis. Well-utilized by sociolinguists, particularly those researching language and gender, this framework can offer much to the discourse analyst, from offering tools for understanding how a group constructs themselves as a community, to how this social grouping can explain systematic discourse practices. I have intended my thesis to bring these areas of research to light, and to offer a small contribution in the way of their satisfaction.

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